Miss Egley

English 15

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Is College That Much Harder than High School?

Screaming football fan, thousands of new people to meet, hundreds of ways to get involved, classes you’re actually interested in. These are just some of the things a large university has to offer. Coming from a small high school, these are probably some of the major reasons you choose to attend a large university. You probably wanted something different, fun and exciting rather than the small, familiar environment you have previously lived in for 18 years. If this is all true, than choosing a large university is probably perfect for you. When beginning to prepare for the major transition from high school to college, you probably have so many concerns including roommate issues, meeting new people and safety. Although these issues are important, you are going to college to get an education and the academics can be challenging and are the primary reason you are going to college.

If you aren’t worried about the academics, you aren’t alone. According to incoming freshman to the University of Connecticut in 2009, only 2 out of their top 15 concerns for entering college were related to academics while the other 13 were related to social issues. (Lucier) In reality, the academic challenges are more difficult once classes begin, According to the US Census and America College Testing Program, 24% of enrolled college students in 2008 dropped out because they were underprepared academically. ( Harke) The academics in college can be very difficult especially when going from a small town to a large university.

According to College Confidential a large university is 15,000 students or more. This massive amount of students, and a large campus to fit all these students can be very overwhelming to students who are coming from a small town. Alicia Van de Waters came from a small town in Pennsylvania (9,000 people) and attended the University of Massachusetts (34,000 people) and was quickly overwhelmed by the amount of students in her classes and the size of the campus. (Cristal) At most large schools, classes tend to be on the larger side to accommodate all of the students. Class size can vary anywhere from 8 students to 1,000 students depending on the course. Even classes with100 students (low range for most large universities) can seem huge coming from high school. Most high school classes have about 20-30 students. (“Education Bug”) Transitioning into these large classes is also difficult when it comes to getting help from the instructor. In high- school, if a student needed help, he or she would simply ask the teacher in class. In college, if a student needs help with material and wants to speak directly to a teacher, he or she would need to attend either the professor’s or teaching assistant’s (TA) office hours When a college student attends office hours, they are expected to have a specific question and not just say “ I don’t understand what we did in class today” like he is she is used to doing in high school. Going to office hours can be intimidating for incoming freshman. This discourages students from attending them and not getting the help they need. Fifty-five percent of freshman claimed they felt anxious before getting individualized help from a college professor. (“Education Bug”) This can discourage students from going to office hours to begin with, which can negatively affect their grades and performance. Because of the drastic change in class size and less individualized help, students have a hard time adjusting to the academics of college.

One of the most exciting things to incoming freshman is the amount of time actually spent in class. Most college students spend about 15 hours in class a week compared to in high school spending about 35 hours a week in school. (Cristal) What most students do not realize is that in college, for every credit hour spent in class, they should expect at least 2 hours of work Studies) In total, high school students spend about 40 hours per week in school and working school work. College students spend a minimum of 45 hours per week in class and doing school work. (UB Undergraduate Advising) This slight increase in hours spent doing work is often the downfall of college students. Incoming students are often unprepared for the percentage of work they will be doing on their own. In high school a majority of work is done in school compared to in college where a majority of work is done outside of class. (UB Undergraduate Advising) Since the student alone does most of the work, freshmen in college often do not have the time management skills to successfully balance all of the schoolwork. In addition, the students are used to having a solid support system in terms of schoolwork. In high school, students often had their parents, teachers and guidance counselor to help them succeed in school. In college, most of the responsibility for schoolwork falls on the student. If the student is not academically prepared to manage their schoolwork, they can easily fall behind without the proper support system. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln- Office of Undergraduate Studies)

Some say that the academic challenges that face freshmen is part of the first year experience. Mary Lee Jenson says that learning how to grow, and be responsible for yourself is what transforms a young student into a mature college adult.

The way classes are taught are very different in college, the professor is going to expect that you will prepare for class. This means reading ahead and preparing questions. In high school, you would never even think about reading ahead, nor be expected to. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln- Office of Undergraduate Studies) In addition, in high school, the teacher’s goal was to guide students and teach them responsibility addition too academics. (Education Bug) High School teachers also often check up to see how you are doing. They ask if you have questions and contact you if they think you have a problem. (UB Undergraduate Advising) Also, the teachers worked with you, your parents and guidance counselor to help you in every way possible (Sullivan) In college, the professor’s only function is in the academic sense and they do not care if you are falling behind or failing. It is your responsibility to communicate with your professor and advisor to make academic decisions. (Education Bug) Because of the difference between high school teachers and professors, a student’s performance can easily decrease from high school to college.

One of the major differences between high school and college is the expectations of the teacher and professor. In general, college exams are given less often (2-4 per semester) than high school exams, which are usually given weekly or bi weekly. Therefore, college exams are worth more than high school exams. (Education Bug) The way the professor prepares students for an exam is very different than high school teachers. The professor does not alway give a study guide, outlining the important information. Instead the exam can cover anything the professor says or is in the reading even if it isn’t mentioned in class. This difference is very unfamiliar to college freshman, and therefore they do not prepare for the exam properly. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln- Office of Undergraduate Studies) In addition, college papers are very different than high school papers. College papers don’t have a specific number of supporting details required to support a thesis like you did in high school papers. In college papers, the paragraphs should begin with a sentence that sums up the main ideas of the paragraph. In high school most paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that goes back to the thesis. These differences, along with the others shown in the chart, are some of the reasons why college freshman have trouble writing papers. Most freshmen are used to a formula and a specific structure and guide for writing, which is discouraged in college. (Vogan)

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| High School | College |
| * Opening paragraph ends with a thesis * Introduction begins with a general idea and then narrows down to a specific topic. * Presentation matters- visuals, titles color * Details can be supported by personal experience | * Not every essay needs a thesis * The introduction should raise the essay topic or question as soon as possible in specific and concrete term * More concerned with ideas and writing * Details should be supported by credable sources |

The academics of college are very difficult compared to high school especially when transitioning from a small high school to a large university. The increase in class size, leading to less accessible help from teachers, an increase in work and the lack of study skills necessary to succeed and the different expectations all make this transition very difficult Although the change may be difficult in the beginning, most students adjust and succeed academically.

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